

Exeter Fire District

(May 18, 2006)

Approved 06/29/06

Call to Order

Chairman Peter Lacouture called the May meeting of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:10pm. Present were Commissioners Vergano, Lacouture, Nievera, Swanson, Reed and Wilbur. There were 4 members of the public in attendance.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Election of Officers

With no candidate to fill the office of treasurer, it was decided to table the election of officers, as well as the new board appointments until the June (29th) meeting. Ms. Vergano stated that she believes that the new treasurer should be involved with the year beginning operations, such as the correction of the tax bill and the processing and mailing of same. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) posting “around town” for letters of interest in the position of treasurer. Responses will be due by June 08 and discussed on June 29. Mr. Lacouture will author a press release for the Standard Times indicating the vacant position. The motion carried unanimously.

Previous Month's Minutes

Mr. Reed moved (Ms. Vergano second) acceptance of the 04/20 meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Reed then moved (Mr. Swanson second) acceptance of both the 03/16 and the 04/20 executive sessions minutes. That motion was also unanimous in its acceptance.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Vergano reports the beginning balance of \$267,966.56 less cleared transactions of \$173,142.40, (\$201,296.63 in checks and payments and \$28,154.23 in deposits and credits) leave a cleared balance of \$94,824.16, as of May 08. These figures agree with the monthly statement from Citizens Bank. Mr. Nievera has reviewed the reconciliation summary and is satisfied with its accuracy. The uncleared register balance, including \$2,690.56 in uncleared transactions, is \$97,514.72 as of May 08. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) acceptance of the treasurer's report. The motion carried unanimously.

Communications

Mr. Nievera read a letter sent to Mr. Cerullo, by Mr. Lacouture, thanking him for his services as moderator at our financial meeting

held in April. A letter of interest for the position of treasurer has been received from Mrs. Margaret Caito.

Old Business

Ms. Vergano stated that we had collected approximately 92% of the billed tax revenue. Mr. Nievera reported that at the close of the fourth quarter collection period there were about 375 delinquent accounts representing \$65,068 in tax revenue. (\$69,313, if interest and penalty is included.) Letters to delinquent taxpayers will be in the mail Friday (05/19) or Saturday (05/20).

There was a brief discussion on the quarterly payments to the public safety organizations, more specifically, with how the projected shortfall would be dealt. Chief Caito suggested a line of credit. Mr. Nievera offered that the shortfall could be taken from the earliest collections received in the following tax year. If collections were received in the same manner as last year, we would have the necessary funds within a week to 10 days of the first payment due date (08/01). Chief Jordan agreed that borrowing the money would not be wise. Mr. Davis (President station #1) requested that the organizations be notified, in writing, as to the manner in which the 4th quarter payment(s) are to be made. Ms. Vergano will notify the individual organizations, in writing, of our intent.

Ms. Vergano reported that she had been in contact with Brad Preston (VFIS) and discussed the “insurable interest” of the fire district. After a brief discussion it was decided that Mr. Wilbur would

contact Mr. Preston, as well as someone from the Hope Valley Fire District to determine how they handled the issue. Mr. Nievera offered his understanding of Chief Franklin's objection to the consolidation. He explained that it was not so much a matter of the insurance company paying on a claim as much as the legalities that could ensue.

There was nothing further to report on the Grant or Capital Expenditures committees.

There was nothing further to report with regard to the ISO project.

It was agreed that a common budget format, as well as a financial disclosure section, is desired for the next budget cycle. Ms. Vergano suggests working on this in the July/August time frame so as to be ready for input from the various organizations as they prepare their budgets for the next fiscal year.

The discussion on a budget cap centered on the need for a cap to be placed on the entire "district budget" or on the "individual organization's budgets." Chief Caito offered that he would need a new truck next year, putting him over the cap. Mr. Swanson stated that we just ask for more money and do not tighten our belts. Mr. Wilbur offered in response to Mr. Swanson, that the voters must exercise their responsibilities and vote at the meetings. Chief Jordan expressed his belief that the general public is not aware of what the public safety organizations are up against. Says Mr. Jordan, "We must do a better job of marketing ourselves." Mr. Nievera added that the organizations have to take the lead in educating the public as to their existence and their responsibilities. After some discussion it

was the sense of the meeting that individual budgets would be subject to a 5.5% budget cap and would require a simple majority to be approved. Should an organization present a budget in excess of the cap, their representative would offer their explanation for the increase and passage for that organization's budget request would require a 2/3 majority. This is consistent with the Town Charter. Mr. Lacouture will draft language for the next business meeting to reflect the discussion.

Ms. Vergano noted that the board of commissioners had neither the control nor the authority to adopt or require a bidding policy for the organizations.

The subject of funding the Fire District Reserve Fund was tabled until the next business meeting.

Mr. Nievera offered two policy statements. One dealing with the back-up procedures for the tax administration/collection system; the other was a general office procedure policy statement. After two minor changes to the office procedure statement Mr. Wilbur moved (Mr. Reed second) acceptance of the policy statements, as corrected. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Nievera will place them in the office at his earliest opportunity.

Mr. Swanson asked if the district had an auditor. Ms. Vergano informed him that we would, at the end of the fiscal year, have our financial records checked by an accountant. He will not perform a forensic audit of our books because of the expense involved.

New Business

A short discussion concerning the minimum bill and overpayments took place. Mr. Nievera was in favor of a \$5.00 figure on both subjects. Mr. Nievera noted that the amount of time, not to mention the postage expense, that Ms. McMahon is wasting returning small sums of money as overpayments is taking from her posting and other collector duties. Several members agreed with the \$5.00 overpayment figure, but thought the minimum bill should not decrease to less than \$10.00. The minimum tax bill, since it requires a by-laws change, will be deferred to a later meeting. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Reed second) that the amount the tax collector be required to return as an overpayment be in excess of \$5.00. The motion carried unanimously. The overpayment policy will begin with Q1, FY06/07.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Exeter Fire District will be held on June 29th, 2006 at Station #1. The meeting will start at 7:00pm.

Executive Session

In accordance with RIGL (§42-46-5(a)(2)) Mr. Wilbur moved (Mr. Nievera second) the board into executive session at 9:22pm. The motion carried unanimously. The board returned from executive session at 9:34pm.

Adjournment

Mr. Wilbur moved (Mr. Reed second) adjournment at 9:34pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Nievera, Clerk

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